

Record of Officer Decision

Decision on whether Torbay Council should establish a Local Authority Multi-Academy Trust

Decision Taker and Date Decision Taken:

Director of Children's Services on 15 October 2026

Summary of Matter or Issue Requiring Decision:

Torbay Council was required to decide whether to establish a Local Authority Multi-Academy Trust (LA MAT), or whether to support the remaining maintained schools to identify and join suitable existing high-quality trusts. The decision followed an appraisal of national policy, Torbay's predominantly academised school landscape, Local Government Reorganisation implications, educational and inclusion benefits, governance and compliance requirements, financial and operational sustainability, conflicts of interest and deliverability.

Decision Taken:

That Torbay Council will not proceed with establishing a Local Authority Multi-Academy Trust at this time. The Council will instead adopt a strategic facilitation role, clearly communicate its position to maintained schools and support them to identify suitable, high-quality trust partners. Trust-matching and support activity will emphasise sustainable governance, school improvement capacity, financial resilience, inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), community collaboration and commitment to Torbay's place-based priorities.

Summary of Reason(s) for Decision Taken:

The number of schools potentially available to join an LA MAT is insufficient to provide the scale, infrastructure, specialist capacity and economies needed for a strong and sustainable trust. Creating a new Trust would require significant governance, leadership, finance, estates, Human Resources (HR), risk and compliance infrastructure, while generating substantial financial and operational risk. It would also create potential conflicts between the Council's statutory responsibilities and any role as trust sponsor or governance participant. Supporting schools to join established high-quality trusts is therefore the more proportionate, deliverable and sustainable option, while enabling the Council to retain its role as convenor, commissioner, champion for children and strategic partner.

Summary of Alternatives or Options considered and rejected and Background Papers:

Two options were considered. Option 1, establishing an LA MAT, offered potential benefits through local stewardship, community focus and alignment with place-based priorities, but was rejected because the available scale was too small and the governance, financial, operational, capacity and conflict-of-interest risks were high. Option 2, supporting maintained schools to join existing high-quality trusts, was accepted because it provides access to established trust infrastructure, governance, school improvement and financial systems, avoids the cost and capacity required to create a new trust, and is more deliverable and sustainable. This was considered at the Director's Overview Meeting (DOM) on 28 July 2026.

Details of any conflict of interest and dispensation granted to the Officer taking the decision or by any Member of the Council in delegating responsibility for any specific express delegation:

No conflict of interest or dispensation was identified in the supporting options appraisal. The preferred option reduces the potential conflict between the Council's statutory functions and a trust-provider or governance role. Any actual or potential conflict arising during implementation will be declared and managed through the Council's established governance arrangements.

Implementation:

This decision will come into effect immediately. The Council will: communicate its position to remaining maintained schools, governing bodies and relevant stakeholders; develop a structured support offer for trust exploration, engagement and due diligence; develop a local trust-matching framework focused on inclusion, community collaboration, school improvement capacity and partnership working; engage with the Department for Education, diocesan bodies, existing trusts and regional partners as appropriate; and maintain oversight of conversion timelines, escalating risks through the appropriate governance routes.

A copy of this decision and any supporting documentation considered by the Officer taking this decision may also be available for inspection by the public at the Council's offices or posted upon payment of any copying and postage charges. Any member of the public wishing to take up either of these options is asked to please ring (01803) 207087 or email governance.support@torbay.gov.uk

Signed: _____ Date: 15 October 2026
Director of Children's Services